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HOW THE WORLD WILL END

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**St. Alphonsus Liguori
Edited by J. Schaefer**



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BY ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

EDITED BY J. SCHAEFER

Signs of the End of the World

IN HIS infinite wisdom and mercy, God has hidden the time of the end of the world from His creatures. He has, however, in the inspired pages of Sacred Scripture, given a number of indications whereby its approach might be recognized. The first of these signs will be the general preaching of the Gospel throughout the whole world according to the prediction of Jesus Christ: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall the consummation come." (Mt. 24/14) The reason for this sign lies in the very words of Christ, "for a testimony to all the nations"; namely, that none may be able to allege any excuse when Christ shall come to judge all men.

Abandonment of Faith

The second sign of the end will be the widespread apostasy or abandon-

ment of the faith of which Christians will make themselves culpable. St. Paul predicts this apostasy in his first letter to St. Timothy: "The Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils." (1 Tim. 4/1) In another of his writings St. Paul again predicts that the Lord will not come "unless there come a revolt first." (Thess. 2/3) According to St. Thomas and other theologians, this revolt or apostasy will include the action of separating oneself from the faith and from obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff. It is well to remark, however, that not all will abandon the faith, but that few men will preserve it.

Prophecies of Daniel

The Fathers of the Church find a third indication of the destruction of the world in the prophecies of Daniel. When the prophet speaks, in Chapter 7, of the destruction of the four beasts, it is generally agreed that the fourth of these beasts, or great kingdoms of the world, is the Roman empire. Scripture scholars and the Fathers of the Church interpret this passage to mean that neither Christ nor the anti-Christ

shall come, nor shall the end of the world occur, until the Roman empire and Roman name be completely wiped from the face of the earth.

Coming of the Anti-Christ

We have spoken of another of these signs of the end of the world previously, namely, the coming of the anti-Christ. St. Paul clearly predicts this in the aforementioned passage of his epistle to the Thessalonians: the day of the Lord shall not come "unless the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

Return of Henoch and Elias

The fifth sign of the end of the world will be the coming of Henoch and Elias, who, according to the common opinion of Catholics, are still alive. Of Henoch, St. Paul testifies: "By faith Henoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had testimony that he pleased God." (Heb. 11/5) And of Elias it is said: "As they went on, walking and talking together, behold a fiery chariot, and fiery horses parted them both asunder: and Elias went up by a whirlwind

into heaven." (4 Kings 2/11) These two saintly personages, Enoch and Elias, will repair, by their preaching, the injury wrought in the Church by the tyranny and impostures of the anti-Christ. To this Elias is evidently destined according to the prediction of the prophet Malachias: "Behold I will send you Elias the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Mal. 4/5) And Scripture scholars and the Fathers of the Church interpret a passage of St. John's Apocalypse as referring to Henoch and Elias as precursors of the end of the world and enemies of the anti-Christ. "I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (Apoc. 11/3)

Prophecies and Miracles

In fearful words the Evangelist goes on to describe the power with which the two great prophets shall be endowed. Clothed in sackcloth as a sign of penance, they shall confirm their preaching by prophecies and miracles. They shall have power to shut up the heavens, to prevent rain from falling during the time of their prophecies, to change wa-

ter into blood, and to afflict the earth with any type of plague they may wish. Should any of their enemies inflict injury upon them, fire shall come out of their mouths and devour them.

Conversion of Unbelievers

The preaching of Henoeh and Elias will result in the strengthening of the faithful and the conversion of unbelievers, especially the Jews. This conversion of the Jews before the end of the world was predicted by the prophet Osee: "The children of Israel shall sit many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without altar; and after this the children of Israel shall return, and shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king: and they shall fear the Lord, and his goodness in the last days." (Osee 3/4-5). There is a difference of opinion among the Fathers of the Church as to the number of Jews who will be converted in the last days; the majority, however, contend that the greater number of the Jews will be converted at the end of the world.

After fulfilling their mission, Henoeh and Elias will be killed by the anti-

Christ, their bodies left to lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three days and a half. They shall then arise from the dead, and, in the sight of their enemies, be raised up on a cloud. A great earthquake shall follow their disappearance, destroying a tenth of the city and seven thousand of its inhabitants. All of these terrifying details are enumerated by St. John in the eleventh chapter of his Apocalypse.

Words of Christ

These signs of the approaching end of the world, terrifying though they may be, are nevertheless, but remote signs. They are made more terrifying still by the words of Christ Himself, predicting the succession of events which will immediately precede the end. They are recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds

of heaven with much power and majesty. And He shall send His Angels with a trumpet, and a great voice: and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them." (Mt. 24/29-31).

Darkening of Sun and Moon

Some scholars have thought that this darkening of the sun and moon will result from the extreme brilliance with which Jesus Christ will be clothed when He shall come in judgment, in comparison with which the sun and moon will appear darkened. This, however, seems to be incorrect, for the Gospel narration explicitly mentions the darkening of the sun and moon as preceding the coming of Christ. More probably, by His infinite power, God will suspend the light of the two heavenly constellations, in a manner similar to the prodigy which occurred at the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The prophet Joel adds another detail to this sign of the approach of the end of the world, namely, that the moon will appear to be of the color of blood.

Falling of the Stars

The falling of the stars from the heavens has, likewise, received several interpretations from Scripture scholars and the Fathers of the Church. Some are of the opinion that the stars shall actually fall from their place in the firmament. Others, however, more correctly it seems, ascribe this phenomenon to the failure of their natural source of light. The sun being darkened, shall no longer reflect its radiance upon the planets. The stars, too, shall appear darkened. And, in their darkened condition, they shall appear to have fallen from the heavens.

Various interpretations have also been given to the words of Christ: "The powers of the heavens shall be moved." Most interpreters, however, agree with St. Thomas, explaining that the 'powers' refer to the Angels. They shall be amazed at the cessation of movement among the constellations of the heavens, astonished at an event which surpasses their powers of understanding.

In addition to these signs, others shall be produced in the heavens, on

the earth and in the elements. In the sea, terrible tempests shall arise, accompanied by such a roaring sound that men shall be overcome with fear. Crashes of thunder, bolts of lightning and terrifying voices shall fill the air, and great earthquakes will shake the earth to its foundations. A consuming fire shall then rise from the depths of the earth, working great ravages among men and animals. St. Peter adds these details in his second epistle: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it, shall be burnt up. . . . The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat. But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to his promises, in which justice dwelleth." (2 Pet. 3/10-13).

Destruction by Fire

This destroying fire, at the end of the world, described in other places in Sacred Scripture as well, has also been interpreted differently by the Fathers of the Church. St. Thomas's opinion,

however, seems to be the most reasonable. He remarks that just as man must be purified before being glorified, so also must the world, which has been created for man, be purified. Those placed on the earth, infected by the sins of men, and all the elements of the earth employed by men in the commission of their misdeeds, will undergo this same purification by fire at the consummation of the world. The purifying fire will be similar to our elementary fire, but endowed by God with a special purifying quality. In this fire all men still living shall perish. St. Thomas, however, adds that sinners will be afflicted by suffering from the fire, while the just will experience no pain, or only so much as to expiate for faults as yet unatoned.

Appearance of Christ

Then will Jesus Christ appear for the judgment, preceded by the standard of the Cross. He shall be accompanied by all the Blessed and those who were still living and enjoying the state of grace. All men shall then be judged, and after the Judge has pronounced sentence, the elect shall be raised to heaven with Jesus Christ. The damned

shall be enveloped in fire, the instrument of divine justice.

Resurrection of the Dead

Pagan philosophers and a group of adherents of the Jewish sect, the Sadducees, denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, maintaining that such a thing is impossible. Resurrection of the body for us, however, is an article of faith which we must profess. You will note that I said 'resurrection *of the body*' for, as men can undergo only a bodily death, their resurrection can be but a corporeal one.

This truth of our faith is confirmed in numerous passages of Sacred Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. Theologians, following St. Thomas, assign many reasons why it is fitting that there should be such a resurrection of the body. The principal reason, however, to my mind, is this: man has been created to enjoy happiness, but since he is unable to find it in this life, the Lord has willed that he acquire it in the next, where it will be eternal. The soul of man, however, is but a part of human nature, which is naturally composed of body and soul. Should the soul, there-

fore, remain in a state separated from the body, man would never be able to obtain *complete* happiness. Hence, it is fitting that the soul of man should, at some time, be reunited to his body, that there be a resurrection of the body.

Exceptions to the Resurrection

There will, however, be certain exceptions to this general phenomenon of the resurrection. The soul of the Mother of God, for instance, has already been reunited to her body. And it is also probable that those Saints who were raised with Jesus Christ, and of whom St. Matthew speaks in his Gospel, will also be exempted from the general law of the resurrection: "The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose." (Mt. 27/52) At the end of the world Enoch and Elias will probably be accorded the same privilege. For the rest, all men must be subjected to death and arise at the end of the world, according to the rule as formulated by Christ Himself: "The hour is coming in which all who are in the tomb shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they who have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of life; but they who have done

evil unto resurrection of judgment.” (J. 5/28-29) This general law of the resurrection, has, therefore, as its purpose the judgment of all the good and all the wicked, that each may receive, both in his body and in his soul, the reward or punishment due his merits or demerits.

Though I have remarked previously that the completion of man's happiness demands the reunion of body and soul, it does not follow that this will be brought about by natural means. It will be an entirely supernatural and miraculous event. There is no power in nature capable of bringing about such an effect as the resurrection. In fact, St. Thomas assures us, aside from our faith, no reason can be advanced to prove even the possibility of the resurrection. He explains, furthermore, that the cause of our resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the gifts of God are bestowed upon men through the humanity of Christ; and just as we cannot be delivered from spiritual death save by a gift of grace granted by the divine goodness, so also we cannot be delivered from corporeal death except by a resurrection achieved by divine power.

Sound of the Trumpet

In his epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul predicted: "We shall all indeed rise, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise incorruptible." (I Cor. 15/52) Various speculations have arisen as to what this sound of the trumpet will consist in, but it seems more probable that it will not merely be something to be perceived by the human intellect alone, but audible to the sense of hearing as well, and so magnified by the omnipotent power of God, as to be heard throughout the universe. St. Thomas even contends that this sound of the trumpet will be the voice of Our Saviour Himself.

By another of those prodigies of divine omnipotence, which shall be so much in evidence in these last days, the dead, though deprived of the sense of hearing, shall be made to perceive the voice of the Saviour, and to obey His directions and those of His ministers, the angels. On the fearful day of the general resurrection, Christ shall call upon His angels to prepare for the administration of divine justice. To one

angel especially, probably the Archangel Michael, shall be confided a particular role, namely, that of summoning the dead to judgment. St. Paul has prophesied this event: "For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." (1 Thess., 4/15) And the dead shall hear the summons of the great Archangel, repeating the terrible words, commonly attributed to St. Jerome: "Arise, ye dead! Come to the judgment!"

Work of the Angels

Partly by their own natural power, partly with divine and supernatural assistance, the angels shall carry out the divine command to reassemble the bodies of men. Member shall be restored to member, and from the ashes and elements into which they have disintegrated, the bodies of the dead shall be reconstructed. Then shall God, through the instrumentality of the humanity of Jesus Christ, restore to each body its own soul, and the angels shall assemble all before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, separating the wicked from the elect. In all probability the Guardian

Angel of each man will be employed in his resurrection, whether he be of the number of the elect or the damned. For it seems only fitting that he who was the minister of divine mercy during life, should, likewise, be the minister of divine justice on the day of judgment.

Time of the Resurrection

Until the day itself arrives, men will be curious as to the exact time when the general resurrection shall occur. In the early church, a group of heretics, known as the Millenarianists, advanced the opinion that there would be two resurrections, that of the just and that of the wicked. The just would participate in the 'first resurrection,' and after this would live and reign with Christ for a thousand years — hence the name, "Millenarianists." Though condemned as heretical by the Church, the opinion has been revived a number of times in the history of the world, most recently by the Mormons.

Actually, and very wisely, Almighty God has willed that the time of the resurrection be a matter of strict secrecy. Most theologians agree with St. Thomas in saying that God will not make this a

subject of revelation. Christ Himself inferred this when he refused to commit this knowledge to the Apostles: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in his own power." (Act 1/7) It cannot, however, be inferred from the text of St. Mark (13/32): "But of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father," that Christ Himself had no knowledge of this day, for to Him was committed all knowledge, but that he did not know of it to reveal it. It would be in vain, therefore, to conjecture when the signs of this last day have been, or shall be, fulfilled.

Place of the Resurrection

Though it would be foolish to conjecture as to the exact time of the last day and the general resurrection, ample opportunity is given to the curious to speculate upon the place of the resurrection. A number of opinions have been advanced during the ages of speculation. Two, however, predominate: one maintaining that each man shall arise from his own tomb or place of death, the other contending that the ashes of each shall be assembled in the

valley of Josaphat, and there shall occur the dramatic resurrection. Most theologians and Scripture scholars, however, agree that the former opinion has the sounder basis, supported as it is by several texts of Sacred Scripture.

Condition of the Body

The doctrine of the resurrection of the human body on the last day has attracted the interest of theologians since the foundation of the Church. Of consuming interest to them has been the question of the nature and condition of the body after the resurrection. In condemning a number of heretics, the Church has defined that our bodies shall be numerically the same as before death. This seems clear also from numerous texts in Sacred Scripture, one of which is the famous text of St. Paul: "This corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?'" For should the soul not be reunited to the same body, this corruptible body could not be said to

receive incorruptibility, nor could the body claim victory over death.

A Delicate Question

In view of this doctrine of the Church a rather delicate question has been posed. It is known that there have been, and perhaps still are, cannibals, men who nourish themselves on human flesh. in different parts of the world. Will both the cannibal and his victim, then, arise with the same flesh? St. Thomas answers that, by some operation the divine power, the flesh of the man which has been devoured will be returned to him, while the cannibal will receive flesh formed on him by other forms of nourishment.

Similarly, by an operation of the divine power, those whose bodies had been overdeveloped will probably receive but a becoming amount of their former matter, while those whose bodies had been underdeveloped, whether because of disease or age, will probably receive additional matter. Each shall arise with all his members, for they are essential to the structure of the human body, and hence to a perfect resurrection. Moreover, those who have, from

their birth, been deprived of essential members by accident or some sort of malformation, will receive these members in the resurrection.

Will Bodies Be Complete?

Such organs of the body as the digestive system, the intestines, and so forth, may seem to be superfluous after the resurrection, for we shall no longer have any use for foods or drinks. Nevertheless, as St. Thomas remarks, they shall probably arise with the human body, since they contribute to the perfection of the body. In a similar manner, such appendages of the body as the hair and nails will also arise with the body, for though they will no longer fulfill their office of preserving other parts of the body, they still contribute to the full perfection of the body. They will arise in sufficient quantity for the proper adornment of man.

Age of Bodies at Resurrection

As to the question of age, the bodies of the blessed will arise in the full perfection of manhood. This is not so much a matter of years as of the state of the body perfectly formed and without de-

fect. It is commonly believed, however, that the elect will arise with those dimensions and characteristics proper to the perfect age of man. This is usually about the 33rd year, the age at which the body has received its full development and begins to decline. Since the resurrection is to be primarily a renovation of human nature, and not specifically a reward or punishment of merits and demerits, the reprobate will also probably arise without such deformities and defects as blindness, dumbness, lameness and so forth. This integrity of their bodies, however, will not be to the advantage of the damned, for the very perfection of their bodies will but add another refinement to the severity of their torment.

Some writers upon the subject of the resurrection have maintained that there will be only one sex, the masculine, after the resurrection. But theologians in general maintain that each member of the human race shall rise in his own proper sex, for the masculine and feminine sexes are complementary to each other, contributing to the perfection of the human species. But since, after the resurrection, man will have attained his final perfection, the number of men

will be completed, and there will no longer be any birth or death, the generative and nutritive powers of the body, which are proper to animal activity in the present life, will cease.

Use of Senses

Aside from these faculties, however, both the blessed and the damned will enjoy the use of the faculties of sense, as a reward or punishment of the merits or demerits of their bodies during life. The blessed, for instance, will enjoy through their sense of sight the beauty of the bodies of Jesus Christ and His divine Mother, for, after the Saviour, Mary will surpass in beauty the bodies of all the other blessed. Through the sense of hearing they shall enjoy the voices of all the Saints, chanting with a celestial melody the praises of God and those of the other blessed. The senses of smell, touch and taste will, likewise, have their own particular delights. All these pleasures of sense God has set aside for the blessed after the resurrection, according to the prophecy of St. Paul: "Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for them that love Him."

Four Special Qualities of Risen Bodies

In addition to these glories of the human body after the resurrection, the bodies of the blessed will be endowed with four special qualities or properties. The first of these will be that of *impasibility*. By virtue of this quality, the bodies of the blessed will be exempt from any change whatsoever. Even should they be placed in the flames of hell itself, they would be unable to endure any pain from the action of the flames or the demons. For, just as their souls are completely subject to God in heaven, so also are their bodies perfectly subject to their souls. No power can weaken this subjection of body to the soul, and hence no power can produce any change in the glorious body.

The second quality of the bodies of the blessed will be that of *subtility*. This quality of the bodies of the blessed will exempt them, because of their perfect submission to the soul, from all limitations of size and weight. The soul will be enabled to govern the body as though it were a spirit, granting it the capability of penetrating other bodies and occupying the same place with them, and of rendering itself visible or

invisible at will. This subtilty of the glorious bodies will not, however, render them untouchable, for they will remain solid and offer resistance to other bodies.

The remaining qualities of the bodies of the blessed will be those of *agility* and *clarity*. By virtue of the former quality the soul will be able to transport the body wherever and however it will. This movement will be so rapid as to be imperceptible, the body seeming to be in different places at one and the same time. By their quality of clarity, the bodies of the blessed will be endowed with a wonderful brilliancy, rendering them brighter than the sun itself, though without offense to the sense of sight, but rather producing a pleasant sensation in it. This clarity of the glorious body will be completely under the will of the blessed: they will be able to reveal or conceal it as they wish.

Bodies of the Damned

The bodies of the damned will, also, be endowed with certain qualities, for their punishment, however, rather than for their glory. They will be *entire*, at

least in so far as they were during their mortal life, as was explained above. They, too, will be *incorruptible*, preserved in this state by an operation of the divine power. For just as the bodies of the blessed will be preserved for their eternal beatitude, so the bodies of the damned will be preserved by the divine justice for their eternal torment.

When all the sentences have been proclaimed by Jesus Christ, the elect will be raised to heaven with Him and the angels, there to enjoy eternal happiness. At the same time the earth will be shaken to its foundations and the reprobate will be swallowed up in flames with the demons and buried in the depths of the earth, there to suffer eternal torments.

End of the World

According to St. Jerome, certain ancient philosophers and even many Fathers of the Church, such as Sts. Justin, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil, maintained that after the execution of the sentences, the world would be consumed by fire. But according to St. Thomas, the opinion most commonly held by other Fathers of the Church

and theologians is that the world will not be destroyed, but will be renewed and, as it were, recreated in a more perfect form. All the pertinent passages of Sacred Scripture, both of the Old and New Testaments, affirm that at that time there will be new heavens and a new earth. Isaias, for instance, prophesying, remarks: "For behold I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former things shall not be in remembrance, and they shall not come upon the heart. But you shall be glad and rejoice for ever in these things which I create." (Is. 65/17-18) St. Peter, looking forward expectantly, writes: "But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promises, in which justice dwelleth." (2 Pet. 3/13) And St. John, describing a vision in his Apocalypse, reminisces: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth was gone and the sea is now no more." (Apoc. 21/1) When the sacred author, however, speaks of a new heaven and a new earth, and adds that the sea will be no more, he does not refer to the substance of the heavens and the earth and the sea being changed. This, the opinion of Origen, is untenable. For the substance of the world will remain the same, but

the heavenly bodies and the features of the earth will take on a more perfect form, and on the surface will appear to be new.

The heavens will be clothed with a new splendor, as the prophet, Isais, indicates: "The light of the morn shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." (Is. 30/26) St. Jerome and other commentators on Sacred Scripture remark that the sun and moon will receive a more brilliant and gentle light as a species of reward, according to our manner of expression, for the heat which they have furnished and for the punishment which they have inflicted for the good of men. St. Augustine, explaining the words of the Psalmist, "The heavens shall perish, but thou remainest" (Ps. 101/27), expresses the same opinion. The heavens will perish, the Saint remarks, in ceasing to be what they were, when they are changed for the better.

A New World

Such brilliance will be added to the heavenly bodies, says St. Thomas, that they will appear as a new heaven, ac-

cording to the expression of St. John: "I saw a new heaven." St. Augustine, commenting on the words of St. Paul: "The fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7/31), remarks that it is the figure of the world alone and not the world itself which will pass away. St. Epiphanius expresses the same idea when he says that the primitive form of the world will disappear in the transformation of all things into a more perfect state.

In this renewal of the world, says St. Thomas, the movement of the heavens will cease, not through any natural cause, but in obedience to the divine will. For then, remarks the Saint, the number of the elect being filled, the human race will be at an end, and consequently, the movement of the heavens, which is designed to regulate the elements for the benefit of the human race, will likewise cease. Hence the sun and moon will no longer be in motion but will remain fixed in the position which will be assigned to them by God.

Then will all the elements be transformed as well and acquire a new brilliance. The earth, St. Thomas says, will be as transparent on its surface as

glass; the waters will become as crystal; the air like to heaven and fire similar to the planets of the firmament. St. Thomas, assigning a reason for this remarkable transformation of the heavens and the earth, argues that all the heavenly bodies and the lesser bodies of the earth have been created for the benefit of man. Since men, after the judgment, will have been elevated to a state of glory, it is only becoming that their dwelling place also be made more perfect and be clothed with a new beauty, just as the inhabitants themselves who have entered into glory. This change will be effected not merely upon the superior, or heavenly bodies, but also upon the inferior, or earthly bodies, so that everything which has contributed to the service of man will receive a new splendor and become a part of this recreation.

The earth, writes St. Thomas, will be as transparent upon its surface as glass. There will be neither mountains nor valleys, but all shall be united. It is in this sense that the text of St. John's Apocalypse is to be interpreted: "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." (Apoc. 16/20) Without losing any of the density which is proper to their nature they will be

clothed with a glorious brilliance and will become as transparent as glass. All of this, with the exception, however, of that place in which hell shall be located.

When St. Thomas remarks that the water shall be as crystal, he does not mean that it will become solid, for it shall maintain its fluid nature, but at the same time become brilliant and transparent. The air will become as ravishing and resplendent as the heavens, and fire as brilliant as the light of the sun.

In summing up his description of the transformation of the world, St. Thomas remarks that all creatures which have served man will receive a greater perfection, not in a natural way, but in a supernatural and extraordinary manner. This will not be because of any merit on the part of created things, but because of man himself who will have merited this increase of glory for the universe that it might, in turn, add to his own glory.

Here the question might be raised as to whether, in this renewed world, there will be any inhabitants upon the earth. Some authors are of the opinion that

those infants who have died without baptism will inhabit the earth and enjoy its purified elements. All that can be said with certainty, however, is that these infants will suffer no pain, neither that of loss or of sense, and that they will enjoy as well natural goods.

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